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RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 RIYADH 008836

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KUWAIT - PLEASE PASS TO APHSCT DELEGATION

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ENRG](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDIS BOLSTER TROOP NUMBERS FOR ENERGY SECURITY,  
MOVE QUICKLY TO ESTABLISH JOINT WORKING GROUP

REF: A. RIYADH 8811  
[1](#)B. RSILVERMAN E-MAIL 11 NOVEMBER TO SJESSEE AND  
THINNEN WITH PROPOSAL FOR A JOINT WG  
[1](#)C. RIYADH 5781

Classified By: DCM MGFOELLER FOR  
REASONS 12958 1.4 B, D, AND E.

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (S/NF) In a series of meetings with the Saudi Ministry of Interior (MOI) from November 10-11, a joint State/Energy visiting delegation learned that the Saudis have made progress in improving security at critical energy facilities. A force of more than 35,000 soldiers, temporarily drawn from the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA), the Ministry of Interior, and the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) are already on the job. In addition, the delegation and Mission representatives made significant progress in developing plans for the composition and operations of a Saudi-U.S. Joint Working Group (JWG) to oversee improvements in Saudi energy infrastructure security. SAG and USG interlocutors agreed to aim for an inaugural JWG meeting in Washington during the week of December 4, and to work toward quarterly meetings thereafter. The Saudi delegation provided comments on the JWG proposal (ref B), and requested a cleared version be ready for final approval during the November 15 visit of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHSCT) Townsend.

[1](#)2. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 16.

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Meeting Participants  
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[1](#)3. (C) Saudi delegation members met with Dr. Saad al-Jabri, Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister of the Interior for Security Affairs; Dr. Saud al-Samari, Director of both the MOI's Modernization and Telecommunications programs, and other MOI staff. In their role as advisors to the MOI, Bearing Point consultants Jay Jones, Senior Vice-President

for Public Services Global, and Michael Samra, Managing Director, Middle East and North Africa, also participated. (Note: MOI recently awarded Bearing Point a three-year contract to modernize and re-organize all MOI's directorates, to include the establishment of a critical infrastructure security program. End note.)

14. (C) U.S. delegation members included:

--Dr. Bruce Averill, Department of State, Critical Infrastructure Protection, Office of Plans, Policy & Analysis, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs;

--Richard Soler, Department of State, Special Agent/Special Program Officer, Office of Anti-Terrorism Assistance, Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS); and

--Alex de Alvarez, Department of Energy, Director of Infrastructure Security and Energy Restoration Division.

Embassy Economic Counselor Silverman, Political-Military Counselor Hudson, Naval Attache Hobbes, Legal Attache Harrell, Energy Attache Ross, and Deputy Regional Security Officer Taylor participated in the key November 11 meeting with the MOI.

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Update on Saudi Aramco Security: Improvements  
Implemented Since the July Security Assessment  
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15. (S) Dr. al-Jabri opened the meeting by reviewing steps the MOI and Saudi Aramco have taken to improve security since

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the February 24 attack on the Abqaiq facility and the July 2006 joint DS/DOE security visits to three major Saudi Aramco facilities. He noted while Saudi Aramco had a strong industrial safety program, it remains vulnerable to military and terrorist attacks. He stated the SAG had greatly increased the number of soldiers deployed to protect petroleum infrastructure. A force of more than 35,000 soldiers, temporarily manned by forces from the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA); the Ministry of Interior; and the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) now protects critical infrastructure throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Significantly, these forces are attached to and under the operational control of the MOI. The MOI plans to gradually replace these soldiers with members of its expanded Facility Security Force (FSF), as its recruits become trained and functional.

16. (S) There are additional positive signals regarding troops deployed to protect critical infrastructure. Dr. al-Jabri noted the MOI had received blanket authority to deploy troops as needed to protect petroleum installations. Dr. al-Jabri added that since the 2003 compound attacks in Riyadh, the MOI controls three battalions on loan from the Land Forces and National Guard. However, intra-ministerial cooperation is still not seamless; Dr. al-Jabri also alluded to an on-going turf battle between the MOI's Directorate for Public Security, which retains control over public security in all quarters of the KSA, and the newly-established FSF Directorate.

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Qibes and Energy Security  
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17. (C) Dr. al-Jabri described mobile MOI units, largely recruited from the tribes, that are now used to guard oil workers working throughout the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter in the KSA's southeast. He stated that five to eight MOI soldiers with two vehicles are used to guard each team of oil workers as they move around this vast region carrying out their work. Dr. al-Jabri praised the loyalty and dedication

of the tribesmen in carrying out their guard duties. He explained they enjoyed their work for Saudi Aramco, as it allowed them to maintain their traditional nomadic lifestyle while still bringing in a salary. He noted the tribesmen had refused access to Saudi Aramco catering and other support, preferring to maintain their traditional diet and way of life while carrying out their escort duties. Saudi Aramco requested 128 such teams to be deployed with the largely Russian and European oil workers working in the Rub' al Khali; Dr. al-Jabri assessed the MOI had done a reasonable job of meeting this request.

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Maritime Attack on Coastal  
Facilities Remains a Concern  
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¶8. (S) Dr. al-Jabri noted the MOI conducted planning to take into account the full spectrum of threats facing the petroleum installations. However, he remains concerned the MOI is not equipped to meet all threats, and specifically highlighted the need for additional protection from maritime attacks. He clarified the MOI's Coast Guard was responsible for protecting petroleum installations up to 18 miles off-shore, while the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) assumes responsibility for installations farther from shore. Naval Attache Hobbes suggested the use of booms to provide additional waterfront access control to Saudi Aramco facilities. Dr. al-Jabri noted with satisfaction since the October 31 visit of Vice Admiral (VADM) Walsh, Commander U.S. NAVCENT, to Rear Admiral (RADM) al-Kayyal, Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces Eastern Fleet (ref A), the two navies had established a "hotline" between their offices. (Comment: While we have confirmed there is no direct hotline between their offices, there is secure telephonic communication between the NAVCENT Battle Watch and the RSNF Eastern Fleet Command Center; the connection is routinely

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verified. End comment.)

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Plans to Train New FSF Recruits;  
A New Training Academy in the Works  
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¶9. (S) Dr. al-Jabri outlined the MOI's plans to hire and train FSF members dedicated to protecting critical infrastructure. He reiterated that the MOI had authority to hire 32,000 new personnel, to bring the total to 35,000. The MOI has started recruiting for the FSF, and hopes to hire at least 10,000 by the end of this year. MODA and SANG would provide basic military training to 6000 and 2000 new recruits respectively, with the MOI training the remainder.

¶10. (S/NF) After basic military training, Dr. al-Jabri indicated the FSF troops would require additional specialized training. He stated the FSF would need additional "train the trainer" courses and high technology equipment, and "we're waiting for a move from your side." Dr. al-Jabri indicated the British and other nationalities had approached the MOI to assist with FSF training, but the MOI preferred to work with Americans.

¶11. (S) Dr. al-Jabri told us the MOI had requested coastal land in the Eastern Province from Saudi Aramco to establish an FSF training academy, to include explosives and munitions labs and testing facilities. He highlighted the need for Saudi Aramco to provide specialized safety training for troops deployed to petroleum installations. He noted Saudi Aramco had been very unhappy in the wake of the Abqaiq incident when soldiers deployed to their installations were found smoking near volatile petrochemicals.

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Bearing Point Integral to Recruitment,  
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## Selection, and Training Effort

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¶12. (SBU) During these meetings and other conversations with Bearing Point representatives, we have learned MOI has tasked its Bearing Point consultants to design processes to recruit, screen, and hire new FSF personnel. Dr. al-Jabri further clarified Bearing Point consultants would also be involved with designing and implementing the new training academy.

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## We have Full Negotiating Authority

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¶13. (S/NF) Joking that the MOI does not usually talk to foreign parties, Dr. al-Jabri emphasized King Abdullah had granted the MOI full authority to work with us on petroleum infrastructure protection activities. He stated Crown Prince Sultan had sent the MOI cables which provided instructions to authorize their work. He also underscored King Abdullah had also greatly appreciated VADM Walsh's visit to RADM al-Kayyal at the King Abdul Aziz Naval Base (reftel A). He stated plainly, "We mean business, we want to protect and make our country safe." He indicated HRH Prince Mohammed bin Naif, Assistant Minister of the Interior, registered a high level of interest in the JWG dialogue, and had called him the previous night to discuss its progress. Dr. al-Jabri underscored the Saudi desire for long-term cooperation with the USG on petroleum infrastructure security, explaining their motive for institutionalizing this dialogue in the JWG. He stated that individuals come and go, but unless cooperation is incorporated into a long-term plan, we would not move towards our final objective. Dr. al-Jabri also explained the JWG would allow the MOI to bypass some of the more onerous SAG bureaucracy and protocols, for example, allowing MOI officials to speak directly with USG technical experts without resorting to formal MFA channels and diplomatic notes.

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## Moving Forward on the JWG: December Meeting is the Goal

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¶14. (S/NF) Dr. al-Jabri agreed the JWG plans should focus on including institutions within the MOI, including other SAG ministries and agencies as needed. He also concurred with USG proposals to aim to hold an inaugural JWG meeting in Washington during the week of December 4, and to work towards quarterly meetings thereafter. The delegations agreed meetings would alternate between the KSA and US as needed. He indicated his interest in visiting U.S. and DOE energy facilities to better understand their security arrangements.

¶15. (S/NF) Dr. al-Jabri and Dr. Saud al-Samari provided comments on the proposal for a joint working group (ref B), and requested a cleared version be ready for final approval during the visit of APHSCT Townsend.

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## COMMENT

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¶16. (S/NF) The Saudi Arabian national security establishment has been characterized by a lack of inter-service and inter-ministerial coordination, and interoperability. The result has been a lack of joint operations, exercises, and doctrinal homogenization. The direct intervention of King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan appears to have made progress in obtaining cooperation among MODA, SANG, and the MOI. While Mission's efforts to communicate with the SAG are often stymied by a daunting bureaucratic inertia and an insistence on formalities, the MOI has clearly received the nod to proceed with dispatch on

energy infrastructure security cooperation. From the Saudi side, this effort appears to be full speed ahead, with a greater commitment than usual to information sharing both with us, and across and within the SAG's chronically-stovepiped ministries.

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